

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SSO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3714

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 3253

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PINT PA

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION LEADER DOMINGO LAINO FREED

REF ASUNCION 3212

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. JUDGE ANTONIO ESCOBAR CANTERO ORDERED THE RELEASE OF RADICAL/LIBERAL OPPOSITION LEADER DOMINGO LAINO AT ABOUT 11:30 AM AUGUST 8. WE UNDERSTAND THE ORDER WAS DELIVERED ON THE BASIS THAT THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO CONTINUE PROSECUTING THE CASE. LAINO MAY BE PHYSICALLY RELEASED FROM PRISON SOMETIME DURING AUGUST 8 AFTERNOON.

2. LAINO HAD MADE HIS FIRST DECLARATION BEFORE JUDGE ESCOBAR THE PREVIOUS DAY, AUGUST 7. THE SESSION LASTED SLIGHTLY LONGER THAN FOUR HOURS AND WAS CLOSED TO PRESS AND PUBLIC SO THAT NO DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE. IN AN ACT OF DEFIANCE, LAINO PRESENTED THE COURT WITH A SEVEN POINT MANIFESTO WHICH HIS LAWYERS GAVE TO THE PRESS. THE MANIFESTO CHARGED THAT: (A) THE COURT HAD NEVER CLARIFIED THE CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST LAINO; (B) THE PROCEEDINGS AGAINST HIM WERE NOTHING MORE THAN POLITICAL REPRESSION; (C) AND THE PARAGUAYAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THE JUDGE ALL LACKED THE IMPARTIALITY TO DECIDE HIS CASE AS POLITICAL PRESSURES
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AND THE JUDGE'S INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH THE COLORADO PARTY PREVENTED THEM FROM ACTING IN AN INDEPENDENT MANNER. THE PRESS GATHERED OUTSIDE THE COURTROOM TO COVER LAINO'S HEARING AND REPORTED THE CRITICAL MANIFESTO FULLY. END UNCLASSIFIED.

3. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: ON AUGUST 7, PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR PAPPALARDO CALLED ME TO SAY THAT LAINO WOULD BE FREED

THE FOLLOWING DAY. THE WORLD LATER SPREAD THROUGH NEWSPAPER
CIRCLES. LAINO'S RELEASE REPRESENTS A SEVERE DEFEAT FOR THE
HARD-LINE ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO HAD FIRST ENGINEERED
HIS "ABDUCTION" AND LATER TRIED TO COVER THEIR INEPTITUDE
WITH LEGAL MANEUVERING. WE BELIEVE THAT DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL
PRESSURES, PARTICULARLY FROM THE US AND EC, FORCED PRESIDENT
STROESSNER TO ABANDON THOSE OF HIS HARD-NOSED SUBORDINATES WHO WERE
OUT TO "GET" THEIR PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE. TEY MAY STILL TRY TO
DO SO ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. WE WOULD HOPE, HOWEVER, THAT THE MORE
MODERATE OFFICIAL ELEMENTS, THEIR POSITION STRENGTHENED BY
EVENTS IN THE LAINO CASE, WILL NOW BE ABLE TO PREVENT FURTHER ACTS
OF VENGEANCE AGAINST LAINO AND CONTINUE EARLIER PROGRESS
ON HUMAN RIGHTS. THEY MAY EVEN BE ABLE TO INDUCE PRESIDENT
STROESSNER TO ADMIT THE IAHR, NOW THAT WHAT CAN AT BEST
BE DESCRIBED AS AN UNFORTUNATE ABERRATION HAS BEEN OVERCOME.
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